



## Portugal

### International Religious Freedom Report 2005

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; there are a number of government and privately sponsored activities that contribute to interfaith understanding.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

#### Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 35,672 square miles, and the population as of January 2005 was estimated to be 10.4 million. More than 80 percent of the population above the age of 12 identify with the Roman Catholic Church; however, a large percentage state that they do not participate actively in church activities. Approximately 4 percent identify with various Protestant denominations (including about 250,000 evangelicals), and approximately 1 percent with non-Christian religions. Less than 3 percent state that they have no religion.

Practitioners of non-Christian religions include approximately 35,000 Muslims (largely from Portuguese Africa, who are ethnically sub-Saharan African or South Asian), approximately 700 Jews, and very small numbers of Buddhists, Taoists, and Zoroastrians. There is also a Hindu community of approximately 7,000 persons, which largely traces its origins to South Asians who emigrated from former colonies in Africa and the former colony of Goa in India. Many of these minority communities are not organized formally.

Government estimates suggest that there are more than 200,000 immigrants from Eastern European countries in the country. More than half of these immigrants are from Ukraine; many are Eastern Orthodox. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) reports 35,000 members. Brazilian syncretistic Catholic churches, which combine Catholic ritual with pre-Christian Afro-Brazilian ritual, such as Candomble and Umbanda, also operate in small numbers, as do Seventh-day Adventists. The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), a proselytizing church that originated in Brazil, also exists. The Church of Scientology has approximately 200 active members, primarily in the Lisbon area.

Foreign missionary groups, such as the Mormons, operate freely.

#### Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion.

The Government is secular. Other than the Constitution, the two most important documents relating to religious freedom are the 2001 Religious Freedom Act and the 1940 Concordat with the Holy See.

The Religious Freedom Act from 2001, created a legislative framework for religions established in the country for at least 30 years or those recognized internationally for at least 60 years. The act provides qualifying religions with benefits previously

reserved for the Catholic Church: full tax-exempt status, legal recognition for marriage and other rites, chaplain visits to prisons and hospitals, and respect for traditional holidays. It allows each religion to negotiate its own Concordat-style agreement with the Government, although it does not ensure the acceptance of any such agreements. The act also called for an independent consultative commission within the Justice Ministry to oversee the application of the act. Representatives of some religions protested the fact that the Catholic Church, although exempt from the act, was granted membership on the commission. Rules implementing this legislation took effect in 2003; however, some rules are still needed to create a registry of religious entities. No group had instituted action to reach such agreement under these rules during the period covered by this report.

The Catholic Church maintains a separate agreement with the Government under the terms of the 1940 Concordat. To comply constitutionally with the Religious Freedom Act, the Government negotiated with the Vatican and signed the new amended Concordat in May 2004. This document abrogates the previous Concordat, which had been in force for 64 years but was considered obsolete due to the changes in national life. The new Concordat was approved by Parliament in September 2004; it was approved by the President of the Republic and ratified in December 2004. The new Concordat recognizes for the first time the juridical personality of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference. The Catholic Church will be able to receive 0.5 percent of the income tax that citizens can allocate to various institutions in their annual tax returns.

Public secondary school curriculums include an optional course called "religion and morals." This course functions as a survey of world religions and is taught by laypersons. It can be used to give instruction on the Catholic religion; the Catholic Church must approve all teachers for this course. Other religions may set up such a course if they have 10 or more children in the particular school. For example, the Evangelical Alliance held 265 classes in schools during the 2004-05 school year. (No figures are available for 2004-05.) Under the 2001 Act, each religion may approve the course's respective instructors.

In 2004, the Government established a Working Group for Inter-Religious Dialogue, a task force to promote multicultural and multireligious dialogue between the Government and society. Among its objectives are fostering tolerance for religious diversity, promotion of interreligious studies, and participation in national and international religious events. The working group is led by a Government-appointed chairman and consists primarily of teachers who, by the nature of their jobs, have professional experience in this area.

Under the Concordat, major Catholic holy days also are official holidays. Seven of the country's 16 national holidays are Catholic holidays.

The Diocese of Leiria-Fatima broadcasts national Catholic programming through the Brazilian Catholic Television network, Cancao Nova.

The Government takes active steps to promote interfaith understanding. Most notably, 5 days a week the state television channel (Radiotelevisao Portuguesa 2) broadcasts "A Fe dos Homens" (The Faith of Men) a half-hour program consisting of various segments written and produced by different religious communities. The Government pays for the segments, and professional production companies are hired under contract to produce the segments. Religious communities send delegates to a special television commission, which determines the scheduling of segments. The television commission has operated on the general rule that religious communities eligible for the program are those that have been operating for at least 30 years in the country or at least 60 years in their country of origin.

The Catholic Church receives 22.5 minutes of programming time per episode, while the remaining 7.5 minutes is divided among the other religions. The Evangelical Alliance receives two 7.5-minute segments per week, while other participating religions receive approximately one 7.5-minute segment per month. The Catholic Church has a program of its own called "70x7," while other religious faiths work together to schedule programming on the "Caminhos" ("Paths") broadcast every Sunday morning.

Lisbon municipal government provided matching funds for completion of the city's mosque, which was not completed at the end of the period covered by this report. The municipality also provided matching funds for the restoration of Lisbon's 19th century synagogue, considered a building of historic significance and still used by the Jewish community for religious services and cultural events. The municipality of Lisbon also provides an opportunity for the religious communities to participate in summer festival events.

### ***Restrictions on Religious Freedom***

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The Catholic Church receives some preferential treatment; for example, chief chaplaincies for the military, prisons, and hospitals remain state-funded positions for Roman Catholics only.

The Papal Nuncio is always the dean of the diplomatic corps. The Church of Scientology, although recognized as a religious association since 1986, does not benefit from the 2001 Religious Freedom Act, since it has not been established in the country for 30 years or recognized internationally for 60 years, as required under the law. Scientology leaders are concerned that exclusion from the benefits accorded under the act may have a negative effect on their ability to practice their faith; however, they reported no discrimination or opposition during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

***Forced Religious Conversion***

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

***Abuses by Terrorist Organizations***

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

**Section III. Societal Attitudes**

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. Participation among the various faiths in crafting the programming schedule for "A Fe dos Homens" has facilitated greater understanding and enhanced mutual respect. Many communities conduct "open houses" or sponsor interfaith education seminars.

There were no reported cases of verbal or physical attacks against Jewish persons or property during the period covered by this report.

Following the interfaith congress held in 2003 at the Catholic shrine of Fátima, representatives of the world's leading religions explored the possibility of opening the shrine to a variety of faiths. The first steps in developing Fátima as a multifaith center were taken in May 2004, when a Hindu religious service was held at the shrine in the Chapel of the Apparitions. There have since been a number of events involving Muslims and Buddhists at the Fátima Sanctuary. As a result, a few conservative Catholic organizations have criticized the Church and called for a more traditionalist role for the Catholic shrine. However, several bishops, including the chairman of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference, have publicly dismissed the criticism.

The residents of the Azores and Madeira archipelagos, although traditionally Catholic, are also quite tolerant of other faiths. Both Mormon and Baptist missionaries are active on the islands. They are well treated and participate in Azorean and Madeiran social life.

A number of initiatives during the period covered by this report focused on the promotion of religious tolerance. In October 2004, President Sampaio participated in a rededication ceremony at the Lisbon synagogue, at which Catholic and Muslim community representatives were also present. The former Minister of State and National Defense, Paulo Portas, represented the Government on January 31, 2005, in visits to the Lisbon synagogue and mosque, where he met with the heads of the Jewish and Muslim communities. Days later, he visited the bishop of the Azorean Island of Terceira. The goal of this series of gatherings was to promote religious freedom and tolerance in liberal societies. These initiatives received significant media coverage.

The Aristides de Sousa Mendes Foundation is a nongovernmental organization established to honor the Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux, France, who defied his dictatorial government and issued visas enabling approximately 30,000 Jews to escape through the country during World War II. The Foundation associated itself in 2004 with many events in the country and cities around the world to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Aristides de Sousa Mendes' passing.

**Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. U.S. Embassy representatives have continuing contacts with leaders of the country's religious communities, including the Catholic Church and the Jewish and Muslim communities.

Released on November 8, 2005

[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51574.htm)